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ABSTRACT

Two years ago the educational server, learn:line, of North Rhine Westfalia started at the State Institute of School and Further Education in Soest, Germany. A special pedagogical concept was put into practice and a platform for different types of schools was built--a platform for information, communication and cooperation among teachers as well as students who could work with the same material (on this server), on the same topics, and on the same problem (from different points of view) in virtual workspaces. In addition to this, a program of in-service teacher training was started. Tutors help teachers to get familiar with new technologies, discover ways that teachers can use the Internet to prepare their lessons and how classes can work with the Internet. This in-service teacher training is meant to accompany the development and evaluation of learn:line. (AEF/Author)

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The NRW- Educational Server learn:line and the Corresponding Project for In-service Teacher Training

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Abstract: Two years ago the educational server learn:line of North Rhine Westfalia started two years ago at the State Institute of School and Further Education in Soest, Germany. We put into practise a special pedagocical concept and built u a platform for different types of schools– a platform for information, communication and cooperation among teachers as well as students who could work with the same material (on this server), on the same topics, on the same problem (from different points of view) in virtual workspaces.

In addition to this a program of in-service teacher training was started. Tutors help teachers to get familiar with new technologies, discover ways how teachers can use the internet to prepare their lessons and how classes can work with the internet. This in-service teacher training is meant to accompagny the development and evaluation of learn:line.

1. learn:line, the Educational Server and its Pedagogical Concept

Background and aims

Learning for life in the „information society" means to face many different specialized, inter-disciplinary or social problems.... So school has to take care of more than teaching factual knowledge and special information of each school subject. Teaching aims at lifelong learning as a perspective of beeing prepared in this changing world. Students have to be encouraged to continue on developping their network of cognitive concepts. By including the new possiblities of new media- especially telecommunication- we hope to improve the quality of working and learning in school and further education. We would like to support a more responsible, constructive and communicative learning in open learning situations where the learning individuuum could better contribute actively by drawing on his/her own experiences. We would like to initiate learning through exploration, communication and cooperation.

The educational server learn:line is a platfrom on the internet for information, communication and cooperation. We want to support (promote) possiblites, to get in contact with other people –outside national schoolsystem as well as abroad- to exchange experience, to work together in projects and to learn from each other. The latest academic research of learning processes has motivated us to create learning sitations that are not only linear structured but open, explorative, e.g. situations, in which learners have to play an active role. This will change the teacher's role, too- from an 'instructor' to a ‚learner enabler', someone who advises and accompagnies the individual's learning process.

New media may play an important role. One should not not forget that media competence is an educational condition for acting in a social and responsible way. The encrease of media competence is one of the most important aims. By working and using new and traditional media students will learn to use them in a creative, appropriate way, knowing the effects and limits of modern technology.

Work Areas –Characteristics of the NRW-Educational Server

Work areas relating to particular topics are characteristic to the NRW-Educational Server. They represent a kind of learning arrangement or provide an infrastructure for encouraging learning. According to our intention to learn and teach with meaningful and specialized contexts, each work area concentrates on a particular topic that is directly or indirectly related to schools, teaching or further

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education. Each work area exists as an independent information and communication offer; it provides the relevant material while still encouraging the user to help to complete the material.

Each work area is divided into the following sections: a *media centre*, a *foyer* and a *noticeboard*.

In the *media centre* the user can find information, selected materials and lesson plans. Links to other sites will help to make other contribute to work on the topic. This could involve the use of texts or diagrams, files of an computer algebra system in math, but perhaps audio files, e.g. authentic documents for foreign language learning.

In the *foyer* interested parties can get the chance to present their own work related to the topic, results and experiences from a particular project.

The *noticeboard* is made available in every work area for questions, answers, suggestions and discussion.

Students can access the virtual *work room* easily by a browser. There they can work together on documents, exchange ideas or files of their work.

At the moment there are 50 work areas on the NRW-Educational Server. Each of them is not completely "finished" but open to further development.

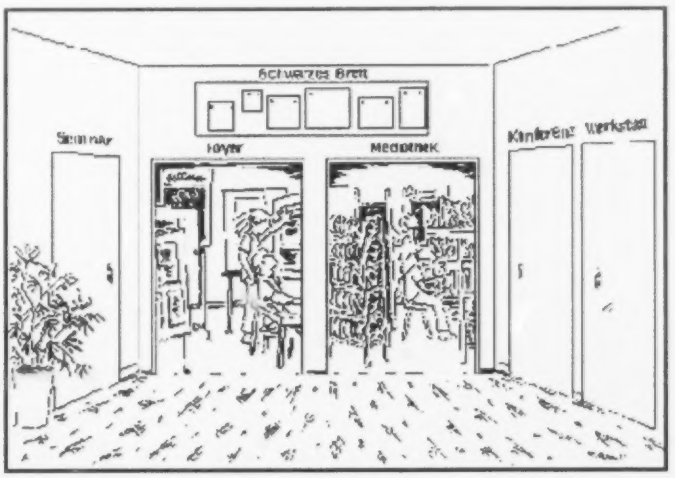

Figure 1: work area compared with an appartment hall that leads to different rooms

Besides the work areas learn:line opens various gateways to information, communication and cooperation. Suitably qualified and relevant sites already existing on the net are brought together and partly commented.

The „meeting point" (outside the work areas) is the virtual location where all educational institutions taking part in the pilot scheme "NRW-Schools on the net - worldwide understanding" as well as interested schools and other institutions can communicate with each other, inform others of the projects they intend embarking upon and exchange experiences and suggestions. For these purposes a database with information on schools and projects, a pinboard and an appointments calendar with details of competitions and other organised events are made available.

Persons in Charge on the Educational Server learn:line

The concept, contents and maintenance of the work areas are in the responsibility of the persons in charge. These may be one single person, a group or an institution. Most of them are teachers, with a high competence on this topic, who do their work voluntarily, without any reduction in working time in school and with any fee for this. The persons in charge are responsible for the contents of the media centre, try to enlarge it by new information and keep it actually. The contents of the other modules are normaly built up by interested users, who contribute to it, discuss and write down their experiences.

Entry to all Offers of the NRW-Educational Server – Different Points of View

There are different points of view and corresponding acesses to the work areas and other interesting sites:

- Via *„Fächer"* (subjects) you can chose different work areas available e.g. for foreign language learning, math, history, geography, german, physics, biology, economics. This entry corresponds to the traditional point of view by the subjects.
- Under *„Themen"* (topics) you will find work areas for interdisciplinary learning.
- Under the heading *„Anbieter/Institutionen"* (providers/institutions) in learn:line more than 200 offers with special interest for teachers are acessable, e.g. newspapers online, museums or announcements of in-service teacher training.

2. Learning with New Media- a Work Area Especially for Teachers's Need

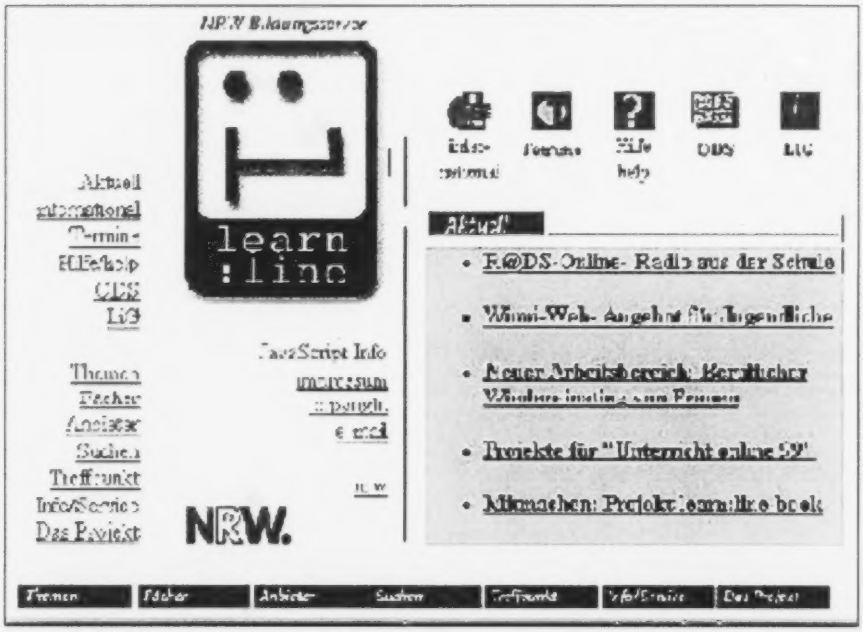

Figure 2 The learn:line-homepage (4.12.98)

From the homepage via *„Themen"* (topics) interested parties can gain access to the work aerea „Learning with New Media". Teachers in particular can obtain informations about media for special subjects. They will find short descriptions of new media that are titeled to be exemplary- hat means media, that can mprove the quality of work and learning in the way mentioned above. Reports comparing similiar products and pointing out main differences are as well as available as ideas for its use in classroom and pointers to other work areas that use or discuss these media e.g. computational geometry.

The *foyer* of this work shows reports of classroom situations, results and student's work with some of these exemplary products.
http://www.learn-line.nrw.de/Themen/NeueMedien/

3. Fairytales - Märchen – A Bilingual Work Area Especially for the Pupil's Need

This work area exists in two versions- an english and a german one. On every webpage the visitor may switch to the other language version. The foyer of this work area is the main and most interesting part of this work area and should be a centre of creative writing – especially for fairytales.

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Figure 3 : The BAAZAR of the Work Area „Fairytales"

Fairytales could almost be the only component of literary tradition which is accessible and well-known to children today. At the same time fairy tales are stories that bring back memories from when they were very young. Children need fairy tales: they are emotionally charged and important for a child's development.

The building blocks and the form taken by fairytales are international - admittedly always new and different, yet often strangely familiar. Anyone who reads fairytales again at the age of ten or twelve may encounter some peculiar aspects in a familiar context and vice versa. So it's an appropriate way to introduce children in this part of literacy.

And here one possible cenario in school: 5 or 6 grade children are asked to talk about their experiences with fairytales – about whether and how they got to know fairytales (told from memory? Read to them? By whom? In what circumstances?...); whether and how they remember some fairytales. (Were there or are there any favourite stories? Can the children still tell one?) Does the tradition still exist anywhere in the world of public fairytale telling? Have fairytales told or read out in class; the teacher may ask the children to choose a fairytale that is as little known as possible and that is nice but not too long. (Particularly in classes consisting of children from different countries, there will be interesting things to be heard.) Even when listening to unknown texts, well-known and familiar aspects will recur. During this period some fairy tales from foreign countries in the foyer of this work area could be used, too.

If the pupils have access to computers, they can work on them as this by no means needs lengthy introduction. By reading fairytales their creativity will be stimulated too. Copying the written fairytales up on computer supports the reworking of texts with the ultimate target of a mistake-free, well-written and well laid out piece.

Also some texts from other countries can be found in the bazaar (foyer). A collection of texts that have been passed on to us by immigrants is desirable for many reasons. And one can think on many more activities that would not be possible without the internet. Many more other things can still be done with fairytales. You can, for example, produce a fairytale on the stage – perhaps as a shadow play with a narrator? This could involve the English, Art and Music departments working together; or you can think up a project (via email) in which the classroom becomes an oriental caravanserai, where the fairy story tellers all come together. Isn't intersting to getting to know the varity a special fairytales that are told in different cultures? Or comparing new one based on the same fairytale theme?
http://www.learn-line.nrw.de/Themen/Maerchen/foyer/foyer.htm

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4. The Corresponding In-Service Teacher Training

To support teachers in trying out the new medium internet and its possiblities for teachers at home preparing lessons and especially in the classroom a group of teachers (about 200) has set up. The first year they helped the schools to connect the computers to a network and managed the access to the internet - sometimes rather difficult because of „old" hardware.

By now most of the schools can work with the internet. The tutors of the in-service teacher training offer courses for different subjects. This ‚teacher on demand' can be invited by the members of a subject conference e.g. of English to work with the teachers and helps with planning internet projects or building up websites. Every tutor is specialized on one or two subjects for in-service teacher training.

5. First Evaluation of learn:line and Future Projects

Learn:line has officially been on the web since 17 th February 1997.

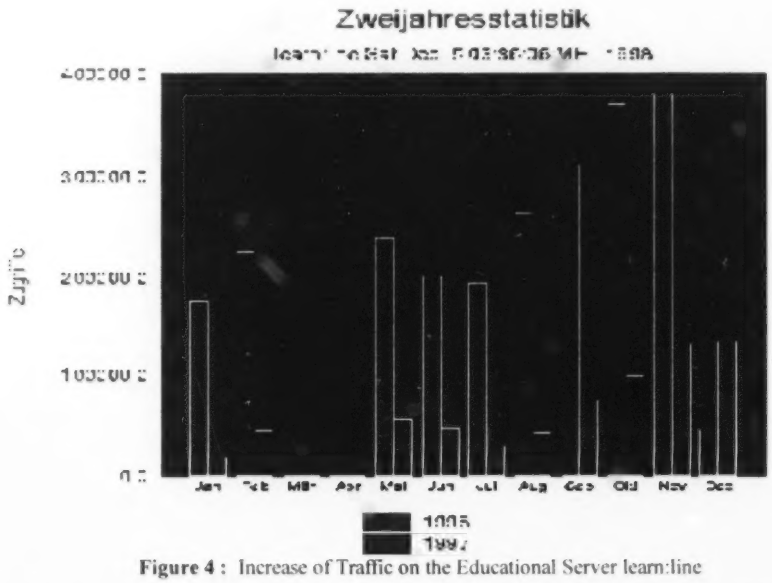

Figure 4 : Increase of Traffic on the Educational Server learn:line

Up to the start the learn:line project has extended with regards to the varying interests and topics of educational institutions. Table 1 shows, how many work areas belong to each educational topic.

number of work areas (areas under construction)					
foreign language	**12**	(2)	**mathematics**	**6**	(3)
german	**6**	(1)	**natural science**	**3**	(2)
social sciences	**8**	(3)	**media**	**4**	
vocationally orientated	**5**	(4)	**other**	**8**	(10)

table 1: number of work areas in main subject fields

The statistics show that the most visitited work areas are theses of foreign language, math and media. However, one thing is clear: no other medium for foreign language lesson can offer more opportunities like this for receiving up-to-date authentic texts for communication between genuine partners. The wide range of materials on the internet, the references to interesting entries and the stimulus given to pupils encouraging them to work actively and creatively on the learn:line work areas take away much of the burden of a teacher by providing for a classroom situation where the youngster work together in small groups. Learn:line wants to support those teachers who want to change their role and want to focus on the children and the individual's learning process.

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In this way learn:line tries to devise a platform based on the latest academic resaerch on learning processes.

The future projects are to improve the possibilies for communication and cooperation so that participants could meet at the same time. The *seminar room* for example is planned to be chatting room, where students and teachers discuss questions and problems relating to the topic of the work area. In a module called *conference room* video conferences relating to the topic can take place.

If we succeed in teaching pupils as well as teachers how to use these new possiblities competently, we can contribute to a lifelong , meaningful learning.

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2. W. Weber (1998): Learn:line - a platform to information, communication and co-operation on the Web, proceedings, Aalborg conference, pp. 53- 58.

Acknoledgements:

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